

Region Commander Safety Message #10



Supersedes Safety Message #9 "Paintball Guidance"

This safety of use message is intended to inform individuals of safety hazards associated with paintball guns. Attention to proper personal protective equipment, gun maintenance, and shooting distance should be given when using paintball guns-regardless if the activity is indoors or outdoors. The listed topics focus on issues that have been recently documented during use. Always refer to the manufacturer's manual and SOP for safe operation, as well as common-sense practices.

Field tests were conducted at Finnegan Range, Ft Knox on 10 August 2005. The field tests examined the gun's performance at 10 and 30 feet from target at different firing velocities. Region safety requirements for paintball use have been changed to reflect findings from the field tests. Test results are available on Eastern Region's web site.

Use Proper Personal Protective Equipment:

- Masks, neck protection, elbow/knee pads, gloves, and Kevlar helmet, where appropriate.
- When selecting a mask, choose models constructed with thermal lenses to prevent fogging and an extended shell to cover the ears. Also consider the mask's comfort for individuals wearing glasses. For masks without thermal lenses, use anti-fogging spray or apply a mixture of baby shampoo and water on the lens.
- Cracked lenses should be removed from service immediately; this is a non-usable mask.
- Lenses should be cleaned immediately after use and properly stored.

Firing Velocity and Gun Handling:

- Improper pressure settings can result in excessive firing velocity, causing skin contusions or serious bodily damage. For indoor play, paintball guns will be adjusted to the lowest firing velocity. For outdoor/STX lane type training the velocity will be set at no more than 250 FPS.
- Chronographs will always be available to measure FPS. Velocity calibration should be performed prior to and during play. As the temperatures rise, as much as a 25 FPS increase has been recorded based on CO₂ pressure increases.
- Pressurize and load the gun only when the gun will be immediately used. Unload and remove the CO₂ cylinder immediately after use for safe storage.
- Canisters should not be stored or exposed to direct sunlight or excessive heat.
- Never fire within the safety kill zone (~10 feet/3 meters for MOUT) (~30 feet/10 meters for STX).
- Always assume the gun is loaded. Use a barrel plug/bag, and keep the barrel pointed at the ground when not in use. Face masks must be worn if guns are loaded, unless the plugs are used.
- Protect yourself and others by ensuring the people around you are using safe practices.
- Always assume a weapon is loaded, and treat it accordingly.

Paintball Shelf Life, Thickness, and Heat:

- Paintballs have different shelf lives. Paintballs that exceed the shelf life (estimated 2 months) or are improperly stored can deteriorate or harden. Hardened paintballs may not break on impact, thus presenting a safety hazard. To maintain shelf life, paintballs should be stored in controlled temperature and humidity environment. When stored improperly (e.g. in the sun), the quality of the paintball will lessen.
- Standard grade, paintballs with thinner shells (e.g. Nelson-Splat), are recommended for indoor shooting.


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Commanding